

Message Text

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AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY PRETORIA

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 03441

EXDIS

CAPE TOWN FOR EMBASSY

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PFOR, UK, RH

SUBJECT: REPMRT ON RHODESIAN "BREAKTHROUGH"

1. ACCORDING TO TWO GOOD SOURCES IN LONDON, THE "NEAR BREAKTHROUGH" REPORTED EARLIER THIS WEEK IN THE SMITH-NKOMO TALKS WAS AN ORAL PROPOSAL BY SMITH FOR IMMEDIATE PARITY FOLLOWED BY MAJORITY RULE IN FIVE YEARS. THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEETING DOES NOT REFER TO THE PROPOSITION, BUT NKOMO INSISTS HE HAS "AN UNDERSTANDING" WITH SMITH. NKOMO HAS ASKED ROLAND BROWN, ONE OF HIS ADVISERS IN THE NEGOTIATIONS' TO BRIEF FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN ON THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT. ON THE BASIS OF SMITH'S PROPOSAL, THE SOURCES SAY, NKOMO WANTS CALLAGHAN TO CALL A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE IN SALISBURY BEFORE THE END OF THE MONTH (HE DOES NOT WANT A CONFERENCE IN LONDON BECAUSE CALLAGHAN MIGHT THEN BE INDUCED TO INCLUDE MUZOREWA

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AND SITHOLE).

2. COMMENT: IF THE ABOVE IS AN ACCURATE RENDITION OF WHAT TOOK PLACE BETWEEN SMITH AND NKOMO, IT IS LIKELY THAT CALLAGHAN WILL APPROACH THIS NEW SITUATION WITH GREAT CAUTION. FIRST, SMITH MAY INDEED HAVE MADE AN ORAL STATEMENT ABOUT DISTANT MAJORITY RULE, BUT HMG WOULD WANT A CLEAR AND DETAILED EXPLANATION OF HIS PROPOSAL AS WELL AS HIS PLANS FOR A TRANSFER OF POWER. LORD GREENHILL, IN SALISBURY ONLY TWO DAYS BEFORE THE "BREAKTHROUGH SESSION, RECEIVED NO INDICATION THAT SMITH HAD CHANGED HIS MIND ABOUT MAJORITY RULE AND, REPORTEDLY, NONE OF NKOMO'S BRITIQH ADVISERS ATTENDED THE LAST SMITH-NKOMO EXCHANGE. FURTHERMORE, THE FACT THAT THE TRANSCRIPT OF THE MEETING APPARENTLY DOES NOT REFER TO THE NEW OFFER WILL RENDER IT MORE SUSPECT IN THE ALREADY DUBIOUS MINDS OF FCO OFFICIALS. SECOND, WE CANNOT ENVISAGE CALLAGHAN GOING ALONG WITH A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE IN SALISBURY IT WOULD BE POLITICALLY UNPALATABLE, EVEN WITH GUARANTEED RESULTS, TO SUPERVISE THE NEGOTIATIONS INSIDE THE REBEL-LIOUS COLONY AND THE POLITICAL PRICE OF A FAILURE WOULD BE TOO HIGH. BUT THIRD, AND MOST IMPORTANT, THE OUTLINES OF THE PROPOSAL WOULD HAVE TO BE SOLD TO THE FOUR PRESIDENTS, THE RHODESIAN GUERRILLAS, AND AT LEAST SOME OF THE UNREPRESENTED MEMBERS OF THE ANC. "PARITY NOW" IS A LONG WAY FROM "MAJORITY RULE NOW," AND IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER THE MOMENTUM OF POLITICS IN SOUTHERN AFRICA WOULD PERMIT THE ACCEPTANCE OF SUCH A FORMULA. IT IS TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE, AND NKOMO WOULD LIKELY BE ACCUSED OF A SELL-OUT FOR SURRENDERING HIS BASIC NEGOTIATING POSITION.

ARMSTRONG

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